



UNIVERSITY OF
WINCHESTER
CENTRE FOR STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT

DISAGGREGATING THE BAME DEGREE-AWARDING GAP: UNDERSTANDING AND EXPLORING THE “ASIAN” STUDENT EXPERIENCE JANUARY 2021





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Foreword



SARAH-LOUISE COLLINS, DIRECTOR OF WIDENING PARTICIPATION.

At University of Winchester, we are driven by our mission and values, and as a university we see the disparities in access and participation as a matter of social injustice that we must actively address. Hence, when the data provided us with the stark reality that our students from different "Asian" backgrounds were significantly less likely to come out with a "good" degree, we acknowledged our shortcomings and duty in closing this gap. Furthermore, as a values-driven institution in a data-driven economy, our initial approach was underpinned by one of our published institutional values of 'Individuals Matter'. Therefore,

we challenged ourselves to better understand the rich and diverse experiences of students from different "Asian" backgrounds in order to identify areas in which we could action positive change. Through this research, we sought to provide an open forum of authentic dialogue that would capture the unique and varied stories of individual students from different "Asian" backgrounds. We did not intend to uncover the "Asian" student experience, or even a magic key to unlocking the "Asian degree-awarding gap", as such an endeavour would be nonsensical. Instead it was our hope, in better understanding both the commonalities and differences of students in this grouping, that we would be able to challenge our own assumptions and begin to make progress in closing this gap.

The report builds upon the growing literature addressing the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) degree-awarding/attainment gaps, particularly where the recent body of research explores the awarding gap between Black and White students in the UK higher education system. Where previous research has neglected the "Asian" perspective, this report acknowledges the many different experiences of students that are deemed to fall under this umbrella category adopted across the sector. Not only does it further demonstrate the inherent disadvantages placed upon people of different racial backgrounds throughout their education, the report identifies a recurring theme that places caregiving as a cultural expectation that could otherwise be seen as an additional area where student support can be accessed. Further work is still needed to better understand the caring role of students from different BAME backgrounds and how universities can target and promote this support appropriately.

As a university, we have already actively begun to implement some of the key recommendations within the report and our most recent data has shown a promising shift towards closing the "Asian" degree-awarding gap. To ensure sustained and authentic change we must continue to incorporate the voice of our students in this work and we will not be content until both the numbers and our students are telling us these gaps have now been closed.

This report arrives at a time of substantial change and reflection within the Higher Education sector. As we enter 2021, it would be remiss not to acknowledge how both the pandemic and incidents of police brutality in the States have heightened the public awareness of racial inequalities. However, whilst antiracist sentiment and activity are not new to our campuses, the recent wave of sector-wide action must be capitalized upon to ensure we continue to close gaps in degree outcomes for students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. It is our hope that in sharing the findings and recommendations of this report with the wider sector, we will not only challenge ourselves to enhance the student experience of students from "Asian" backgrounds but also challenge other providers to do so.

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Executive Summary

The sector has shown a strong dedication towards eliminating gaps in attainment along ethnic lines, however disparities in experiences and outcomes persist amongst Black, Asian, minority ethnic (BAME) students. Not only is the need to eliminate such gaps a matter of social and moral responsibility, UK universities registered as higher education institutions by the Office for Students (OfS) must actively demonstrate their commitment towards this via their Access and Participation plans.

This report showcases one aspect of The University of Winchester's efforts to closing gaps in access, success and progression for a particular student demographic. Having noted a large degree-awarding gap between UK-domiciled White and "Asian" students, this report collates the findings of a research project aimed at better understanding the university experiences of our "Asian" students to begin understanding this large disparity. The research importantly highlights the significance for universities to disaggregate between and amongst their "BAME" students – offering a critique on the sector's over-reliance of the term "BAME" to capture an experience which is inherently heterogenous and therefore requires targeted measures for effective redressal.

Noting a limited amount of literature which looks at the experiences of "Asian" students specifically in Higher Education, the report sought to identify why the University of Winchester was reporting such large gaps in attainment. This was achieved via the below research aims:

- To understand students' identity in relation to being "Asian"
- To explore the personal (i.e. lived experiences) and educational stories of "Asian" students
- To understand "Asian" students' experiences of HE so far to enhance their academic and overall student experience
- To look into the aspirations and goals of "Asian" students, post-graduation, whilst at university

The report highlights findings in line with existing literature related to BAME student experience, including: social and cultural isolation, lack of representation and racialised experiences both in and outside of formal learning and teaching spaces (Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2017; NUS, 2011, Dhanda, 2010). However, what should be emphasised is the distinct way in which these were experienced as markedly different to other BAME students (an experience largely defined in HE through the lens of "Black" students) because of the undertones relating to students' "Asian" background and intersectional identities (e.g. religion was noted to be an important part of this identity).

As the sample of students largely represented those from South Asian backgrounds, a common thread indicated the significance of cultural values which placed importance on the role of family in students' lives. For example, whilst students clearly valued the strong relationships they held with their families (notably their parents), the report considers how this may unintentionally place burden upon students. Importantly, students did not perceive such relationships to have a negative effect on their lives (rather the opposite!). The report recommends further interrogation of this and would welcome longitudinal studies which explores the impact of caring on "Asian" students' lives.

Findings from the research conclude with four areas of recommendations which, if followed, will positively result in enhancing the student experience for Winchester's "Asian" students and thus will actively work towards eliminating such large degree-awarding gaps. These include the institution holistically considering the wider campus culture; learning and teaching mechanisms; and areas supporting students' access, progression and success lifecycle. Acknowledging the strong partnership between the university and Winchester Student Union, recommendations are also directed towards the Student Union relating to their influence and activities as they make up an equally important part of the university's campus culture.

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS – SUMMARY:

We provide here a summary of the main recommendations emerging from the report findings. This is with the caveat that some of these changes are in the process of/ have already been implemented at the university.

CAMPUS CULTURE

1. BAME mental health provision

Formalised support mechanisms catering to a range of different racial and cultural backgrounds.

2. Building awareness of race and diverse cultures

Facilitating inter-cultural awareness across the student and staff body so that "Asian" backgrounds and cultures are not made to feel abnormal.

3. Racially/culturally diverse events

Students were aware of the lack of events which spoke to their "Asian" heritages.

4. Addressing racial harassment – policy and training

Improved mechanisms to address the under-reporting of racism must also be paired with appropriate training (e.g. White allyship).

5. Increased ethnic and racial diversity amongst staff and student body

Students noted a source of comfort when seeing representation from similar ethnic/racial backgrounds.

6. Multi-faith prayer spaces

An identified lack of dedicated space for religiously minoritised student groups.

7. Bespoke feedback opportunities

A conscious awareness that current feedback mechanisms may present barriers for "Asian" students to engage with.

ACCESS, SUCCESS AND PROGRESSION

1. Targeted student access

A reluctance to attend a predominantly 'White' university and perceptions of attending a less diverse university (e.g. not fitting in) need to be addressed and challenged by highlighting appropriate available support and accommodations.

2. Transition support into and through university

A 'culture shock' when first attending university, and lack of understanding of what is needed to succeed from Level to Level.

3. Targeted employment support

Assisting students (and working with their families) to highlight the graduate opportunities stemming from their courses, especially those not deemed as 'culturally valuable.'

4. Promotion and targeting of young adult carers support

"Asian" students may not self-identify as carers due to cultural values placed upon the family which could cause academic strain.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

1. Provisions for students with English as a second language

Lack of accommodation for students with ESL when completing assignments, suggesting more facilitation of needs to be put in place.

2. Decolonising the curriculum/classroom

Must be inclusive of content and classroom cultures and interactions which acknowledge and respect diverse perspectives.

3. Academic facilitation during cultural and religious holidays

Academic calendars could be mindful of cultural and religious holidays to ensure students can celebrate without facing academic penalty.

4. Financial support fund for representation in creative degrees

"Asian" students studying creative degrees struggled to represent their artistic vision.

5. Timetabled academic support

Low uptake and a potential reluctance of using academic support provisions. Embedding sessions within programmes could promote 'nudge theory'.

WINCHESTER STUDENT UNION

1. Diverse campaign and events

Campaigns which acknowledge ethnically diverse social issues (e.g. body hair, Islamophobia).

2. Addressing racial harassment – policy and procedures

Illuminating students of the process and procedures of reporting harassment, especially if these occur within Student Union activity groups.

3. Student Academic Representatives – monitoring and training

Ensuring that StARs engage with all types of students which would bring understanding of specific issues faced by "Asian"/BAME students.

4. BAME student officer

A dedicated student officer role from a BAME background would bring reassurance to students that their problems/issues/desires would be deemed relevant.

5. Mandatory ally and bystander awareness training for Sports team, Societies and Representational Networks

Activity groups can be a common site where racism occurs, training should occur so that student leaders are aware of what this looks and what needs to be done when incidents occur.

6. Asian society

Lack of representative social space heavily emphasised within focus groups.

Introduction

Across the sector a well-known degree awarding gap (more commonly referred to as the 'attainment gap') has been identified between Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students and White students. This has been a long standing and persistent issue within universities across the UK (see Table 1) (collated from: Equality Challenge Unit, 2010; Advance HE, 2017; Universities UK and National Union of Students, 2019)

Academic year	Recorded gap in attainment between White and BAME students
2003-4	17.2%
2004-5	< 18%
2005-6	18.8%
2006-7	< 19%
2007-8	18.3%
2008-9	18%
2015-6	15.6%
2017-8	13.3%

Table 1 – Mapping the BAME degree awarding gap

A wealth of information has been published looking at the degree-awarding gap between White and BAME students. This includes notable publications such as Broecke and Nicholls' (2007) research report (one of the first reports correlating ethnicity and an attainment gap) to the recent UUK and NUS 'Closing the gap' report (Universities UK and National Union of Students, 2019). Others have produced systematic literature reviews (Singh, 2011; Miller, 2016), and we have seen sector bodies such as the Equality Challenge Unit and the Higher Education Academy (now Advance HE) bring together institutions to research the wider issues of and responses to the degree-awarding gap (Equality Challenge Unit and Higher Education Academy, 2008; Berry and Loke, 2011; Stevenson, 2012). There is also a growing body of published research from universities who are implementing strategies to tackle their own gaps and better understand the experiences of their BAME students (Cotton et al., 2016; Smith, 2017; McDuff et al., 2018).

The above cited research addresses the multitude of academic, social and psycho-social factors that disadvantage BAME students from thriving when at university. More recently however, colleagues in the sector have drawn attention to the utility of using the term "BAME" to describe the experiences of students from these backgrounds. The term has thus been critiqued in assuming a homogenous experience and over-simplifies approaches that aim to have meaningful impact (Hammond et al., 2019; Smith, 2017; Stevenson, 2012). The University of Winchester's efforts to ensure effective redressal have thus focussed attention to the experiences of "Asian" students (which institutionally refer to students from Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Chinese and "Asian other" backgrounds) due to the large gap in degree attainment that was identified. Where a Key Performance Measure of the OfS relates to reducing gaps in certain students' access, participation and success from/within Higher Education, [their guidance to providers when creating Access and Participation Plans](#) emphasises the need to disaggregate data relating to student characteristics. Additionally, their [Access and Participation dashboard](#) enables accountability and transparency across registered providers within the UK in relation to such gaps.

“ASIAN” STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION – NATIONAL CONTEXT

There is limited literature which actively disaggregates the experiences of “Asian” students within Higher Education in relation to their university experiences and the degree-awarding gap. As will be evident within the report, there was a strong South Asian representation within the student sample which has led to inquiry of South Asian students' experiences specifically. Taking into account the intersectional identities of South Asian students enables the literature base to broaden slightly and include reference to Muslim students, who largely occupy these ethnic backgrounds and have also drawn attention due to gaining lower degree attainment compared to their non-Muslim peers (Malik & Wykes, 2018; Stevenson, 2018; Codioli McMaster, 2020).

The main themes drawn out from a limited literature review include:

- Familial/parental importance placed on education as an enabler of social mobility (Anwar, 1998; Bhatti, 1999; Bagguley & Hussain, 2007)
- The importance placed on family and how this mediates decisions related to university. For example, subject choice, choosing to commute and taking on caring responsibilities (Claridge et al, 2018; Hussain & Bagguley, 2007; Bagguley and Hussain, 2016).
- A sense of isolation and lack of belonging in academic and social spaces whilst at university (Bains, 2002; Stevenson, 2018; National Union of Students, 2018; Shaffait, 2019).

The importance of further exploring the “Asian” student experience is crucial given that this student group have consistently reported less positive academic experiences and represent a demographic which report being one of the least satisfied across all ethnic groups (Neves & Hillman, 2018; Office for Students, 2020; Surridge, 2007; Williams & Kane, 2008). This is also compounded by the fact that “Asian” students are the second largest group experiencing racial harassment whilst at university (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019). However, there may be evidence of increased interest in this particular student group, whereby Anjum (2020) describes internal research occurring at King's College London following their own data suggesting that “Asian” students reported significantly lower levels of 'belonging'.



“ASIAN” STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

The university sits within the county of Hampshire which is a largely White British county with 89% of its inhabitants identifying as such (Hampshire County Council, 2013). This is significantly higher than the national average of 80.5%. The city and district of Winchester is around 92% White British, with the largest minority group being individuals coming from an “Asian” background (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi & Chinese) – making up 2.3% of the total population. Our student population is predominantly White, with a relatively steady recruitment of BAME UK-domiciled students of around 10%. Similarly, our largest minority group is “Asian” students accounting for around 4% of our student body.

In 2018/19 we had identified that whilst, as a university, “Asian” students represented our largest ethnic minority group and were more like to continue with their studies compared to their peers, there were concerns around a growing gap in both attainment and progression into graduate-level employment. Situating our context more broadly, the University of Winchester’s own BAME degree awarding gap currently sits at around 16%. However, in 2019, when developing our new 5-year Access and Participation Plan (2020/21-2024/25) we observed a large and concerning gap in awarding of 1st and 2:1 honours degrees between our UK-domiciled White and “Asian” students. The OfS data dashboard identified a statistically significant gap for UK “Asian” student outcomes in both 2016/17 and 2017/18. The (non-statistically significant) gap which sat at 20 percentage points in 2014/15, increased to 33 percentage points in 2016/17 and dipped to only 32 percentage points the following year. Likewise, an unexplained gap in rates of UK “Asian” students progressing to higher study or graduate level employment increased by 21% in the last four years. This institutional trend bucks the national trend where, in general, “Asian” students tend to have better attainment and progression outcomes than other ethnic minority groups (UUK and NUS, 2019).

This research was thus established as a needed project to better understand the gaps in student outcomes as part of our theory of change for addressing the BAME degree-awarding gap. By focusing on the factors which may explain why such a large gap has developed over the years, this research project aimed to better understand these students’ stories to improve upon their overall university experiences and outcomes.



Project Overview

Identifying this large gap in degree-outcomes for our "Asian" students, the research brought together two departments (Department of Student Engagement and Employability and Department of Widening Participation) to investigate the experiences of "Asian" students at Winchester, as little was known about this demographic. The research undertaken aimed to gain rich, qualitative data in order to explore the complexities within this experience whilst utilising students' experiential knowledge (Flick, 2018; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). The aim and objectives of the research are detailed below.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES:

To understand the lived experiences of UK domicile "Asian" students in order to illuminate explanations of the enlarging degree awarding gap at University of Winchester

- To understand students' identity in relation to being "Asian"
- To explore the personal (i.e. lived experiences) and educational stories of "Asian" students
- To understand "Asian" students' experiences of HE so far to enhance their academic and overall student experience
- To begin looking into the aspirations and goals of "Asian" students, post-graduation, whilst at university

WINCHESTER RESEARCH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME (WRAP)

The University of Winchester provides many avenues for student-staff collaboration. This includes schemes such as Student Fellows (SFS), run by the University and Winchester Student Union (Sims et al., 2014), and the Winchester Research Apprenticeship Programme (WRAP). Execution of this project relied on utilising the latter. The WRAP scheme gives students the opportunity to take part in real research and work in close partnership with either academic or professional service staff. Importantly, in being an institutionally run scheme, it can recognise the time of student research partners through payment. This project was able to fund two student research partners (Isabella Valente and Zuni Khan) for 52 hours of work (equating to £330 each) who were integral to the success of this project. The research also underwent a rigorous ethical review process by the university's Research Ethics Committee and received ethical clearance in January 2020.

METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

The research used a mixed method approach to data collection. This approach to data collection is a common method used when researching areas related to the BAME degree-awarding gap and understanding BAME student experience (National Union of Students, 2011; Cotton et al., 2016; Smith, 2017) in common with the wider national picture in higher education, at LBU there was a significant disparity between the percentage achievement of good degrees (Firsts and 2:1 classification. Students who self-identified as "Asian" (i.e. coming from a Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Chinese or Asian 'other' background) were asked to complete an online questionnaire and were also invited to attend a follow-up focus group. Previously, the University of Winchester has undertaken research looking into the 'Black' student experience (Alterline, unpublished). This research was conducted by an external research organisation (Alterline) and collected data using semi-structured interviews and reflective diaries. Access to the interview guides used from this research was used as inspiration for establishing the four research objectives that were set out for this project, subsequently forming the four sections used in the focus group interview guide.

Participation in both the online questionnaire and focus group led to students receiving a £10 Love2shop voucher, appropriately recognising their time. Participants were informed that the project wished to better

understand the "Asian" student experience at Winchester in order to look for areas of enhancement. They were not informed that this project fed into the wider issue of the degree-awarding gap until being debriefed at the end of focus group sessions. The rationale behind this decision was due to not wanting to influence or prime answers and responses. Indeed, this approach was also taken by the aforementioned Alterline research exploring the lived experiences of Black students. Focus groups could be described as "ethnically-homogenous" to a certain extent as the research team comprised of two students and one staff member who broadly belonged to "Asian backgrounds" (these included: British Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Portuguese/Iranian). However, it is recognised that this did not meet the exact ethnic background of all students present. Whilst the literature does not explicitly state the level of similarity required, the use of ethnic peer-matching between researcher and participants has been detailed as being an effective measure for data collection, particularly with under-represented communities (Claridge et al, 2018; Gunaratnam, 2003; Ryan et al., 2010).

The online questionnaire was live for 3 weeks in February 2020, with two focus groups also taking place toward the end of February 2020. Please see Appendix 1 and 2 for more information.

RECRUITMENT

A multi-pronged approach was used to recruit "Asian" students to take part in the study. This largely included flyers posted around the two main campuses (the King Alfred and West Downs campus) of the university and weekly adverts placed on the online student noticeboard. The most powerful forms of recruitment were a centralised news item posted on the student and staff intranet portal homepage, and the pre-existing connections to "Asian" students held by the student research partners.

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

The online questionnaire went live for 3 weeks in February 2020. The purpose of the questionnaire served as a way to collect baseline opinions in a quantitative form relating to the 4 identified areas of exploration. Additionally, it acted a prepping (rather than priming) tool for participants who then attended a subsequent focus group.

A total of 25 self-identifying "Asian" students completed the questionnaire. Figure 1 details their ethnicity (indicating a large South-Asian representation) and Figure 2 shows a higher proportion of first year students. These two questions were the only demographical questions asked.

ETHNICITY – ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

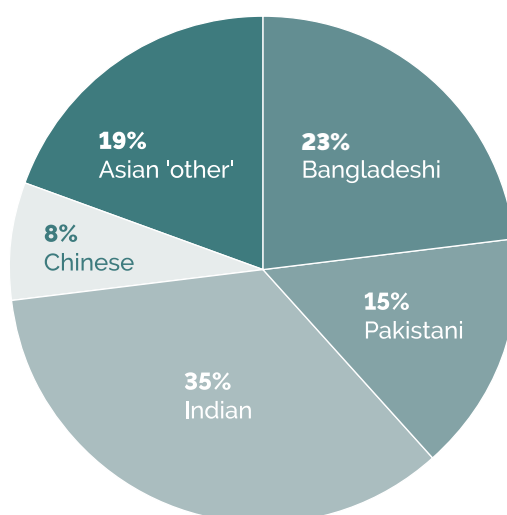
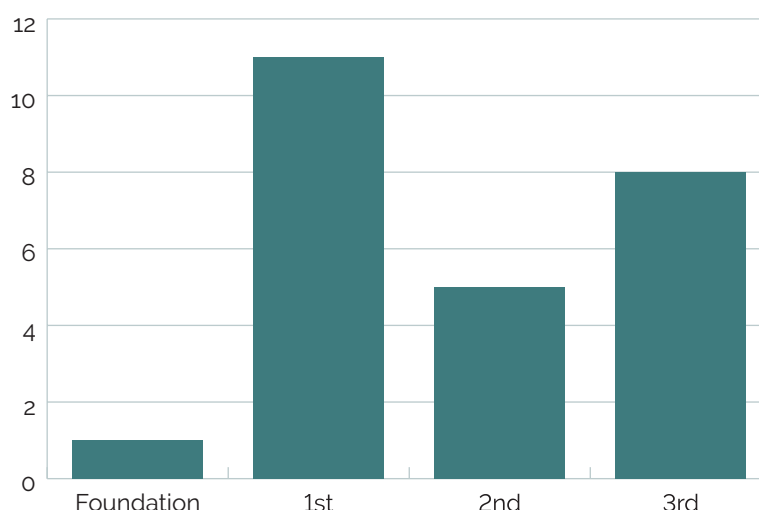


Figure 1 – Ethnic background of questionnaire respondents



[Figure 2 – Year of study for questionnaire respondents]

The questionnaire utilised 10 closed-ended items in the form of a 5-point Likert scale (e.g. 'Being Asian is a significant part of my identity' – strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). Overall, it was felt that the questionnaire did not reveal any major concerning responses with the following assertions being:

- It was clear that being "Asian" was a significant part of students' identity (56% agreed and 44% strongly agreed to this statement), with 72% believing that their race played a major role in shaping their everyday lived experiences.
- Familial influence to study their course was slightly ambiguous. Whilst 44% disagreed that their family played a role in this, over 1/3 of students did agree to this.
- 80% of students reported feeling confident in balancing their student life with their family life. A lesser extent, yet still high proportion of students (72%), felt confident in balancing their student life with their social life.
- Students reported "good" relationships with their peers and their teachers – 72% of students agreed to having good relationships with peers and teachers.
- Over 70% of students reported being happy with their course curriculum.
- Whilst many students were aware of where they needed to go for any type of support, just under ¼ of students (24%) seemed unsure about this.
- It was clear that the vast majority of respondents (88%) held some clear direction of career plans post-graduation.

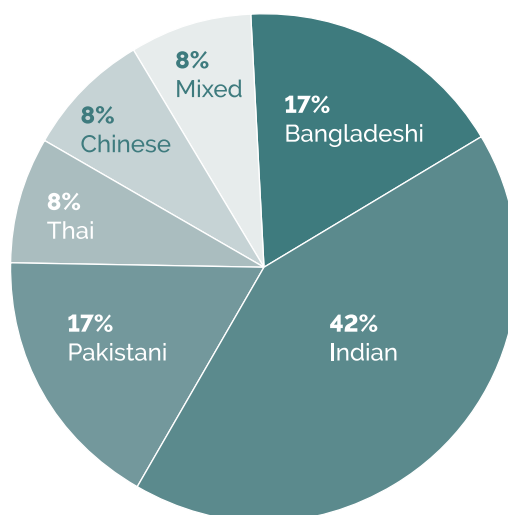
Due to a relatively low number of responses, the generalisability of these findings may be called into question; there are also inherent limitations of self-reporting questionnaires e.g. the influence of question ordering or knowing that responses could be traced back to students when they were invited to attend a follow-up focus group (Lavrakas, 2008). Additionally, given that Winchester's UK-domiciled "Asian" student population stood at 361 in 2019/20, this means that the questionnaire only captured around 7% of these voices. However, by using a subsequent focus group, these responses could be further elaborated upon and give insight to those respondents who were less favourable about their experiences.

FOCUS GROUPS

Students who had completed the online questionnaire were prompted to attend a follow up focus group, and were asked provide consent if they were happy to be contacted again (within one year of the date of their initial participation) for further research purposes. Before taking part in the focus group, students were required to read a project information sheet and sign a consent form.

Two focus groups were held at the end of February 2020. Focus Group A had four students present, and Focus Group B had eight students, giving a total of twelve students whose voices are represented in the findings. Given that the percentage of "Asian" students at the university is small, this increases the likelihood of students' anonymity being compromised. As such, any reference to course and year of study have been omitted, as well as the use of pseudonyms. However, Figure 3 details the ethnic make-up of students who took part in the focus groups, again, showing a strong South-Asian representation.

ETHNICITY - FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS



[Figure 3 – Ethnic background of focus group participants]

Each focus group lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes and were audio recorded and transcribed by the student research partners. Both focus groups were chaired by the lead researcher, with the student research partners making detailed notes or monitoring when each participant spoke (for transcription purposes). It should be noted that, whilst each focus group followed a dedicated interview guide, there was more opportunity for students in Focus Group A to speak about their circumstances outside of their current university experience. Following a de-brief amongst the research team after Focus Group A, it was decided that Focus Group B would need to place more precedence on aspects related to the academic and social experiences of our "Asian" students.

ANALYSIS

Both focus groups were thematically analysed using the Braun and Clarke (2006) approach (i.e. familiarization; coding; generating themes; reviewing themes; defining and labelling themes; write-up). This was done separately by the lead author and one student research partner (Isabella Valente). An inductive approach to thematic analysis (Hayes, 2000) was used whereby the data determined the subthemes and codes identified. Given that this was a small-scale study, it felt reasonable to include themes and findings which may have been over-represented by one student. However, these become important when discussing the number of recommendations coming from this study.

THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS OF THE REPORT DETAIL THE FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS:

- **Section 1** – Identity in relation to being "Asian"
- **Section 2** – University and on-campus experiences
- **Section 3** – Learning and teaching experiences
- **Section 4** – Recommendations

Section 1 – Identity in relation to being “Asian”

Research conducted by Alterline (unpublished) found that there was a significant importance placed on Black identity from students. Questions in this section therefore related to: the lived experiences of being “Asian” and the importance students placed on their “Asian” identities

IMPORTANCE OF “ASIAN” IDENTITY AND CULTURE

Students in this research were firstly asked about how they regarded their “Asian” identities and whether this was something that shaped their lives. Mariam poignantly stated and summarised *“I can’t hide the fact that I am Asian. You can see it in my skin colour, you can see my hair colour. It will dictate how people treat me. Sometimes it’s good, sometimes it’s bad”*. It was therefore clear that for the majority of our students, being “Asian” was a significant aspect to their lives, shaped by their different cultures and ethnicities. For example, some students had mentioned that certain degrees were deemed more ‘culturally desirable’ than others. When queried further, these students mentioned this included subjects like: Law, Business Studies, Accountancy, Medicine and Engineering. Three students had specifically mentioned that their parents were keen for them to pursue routes into Medicine and Science, but they ultimately chose pathways in line with their own interests and aspirations. This resonates with findings relating to the wider ‘BAME’ subgroup where Black students reported feeling pressured to take “socially respectable” degrees such as Medicine and Law (National Union of Students, 2011) and where the highest proportions of ‘BAME’ students are seen in these subject areas (i.e. 35.5% of all students studying Medicine were ‘BAME’ in 2017/18) (Advance HE, 2018).

“My mum wanted me to be a doctor but I really liked Psychology so I told her I’ll be some type of doctor in that field instead.” (Samira)

Throughout the report, it will become clear how “Asian” intersectional identity pervades almost all aspects of the majority of our students’ lives e.g. the role of religion was deemed highly significant where students mentioned growing up in Hindu and Muslim households. However, this section will discuss how this has impacted students’ identity and values..

FAMILIES AND THE UNLABELLED CARERS

An interesting finding noted a clear importance placed upon the family and parents, which brought both positive and potentially negative impacts on some of our students’ lives. For example, two students detailed how they took on significant care responsibilities in addition to their student and part-time working lives. Both Mariam and Rashida were able to described how caring for their parents affected many of their day-to-day lived experiences:

“I do look after my mum and dad and sometimes it’s really hard. They don’t drive and their English is not exactly fluent, so I help them with their day-to-day life as they won’t be able to do that on their own. It’s really hard to juggle when it comes to studying. I’m also working part-time. I am sure there is support available from the university but I’m probably not aware of it.” (Mariam)

However, students who spoke about caring responsibilities correlated this back to their cultures where this is seen as largely normalised, as explained by Rashida below:

"I don't think I see myself as a carer because I feel like it's so ingrained in me, I feel like it's normal to me. I've been looking after my parents since college. I'm the one making doctor's appointments, taking them to hospital and being a translator. But I'm not the only one doing it, my sister looks after my parents too so we're all sharing the load and responsibility." (Rashida)

Thus, these students did not perceive this to be a strain or something that was forced upon them; there was a genuine want to take on such responsibilities (see the exchange between Aila and Mariam below):

Aila: The way Asian families and Muslim families are brought up, we value family, community and that kind of stuff, so we don't do it because we have to, we do it out of love, so it's not seen as a burden.

Mariam: Yeah, I actually want to look after my parents, they are my best friends. Out of all my siblings, they are most comfortable coming to me, so I do everything for them, but I don't see it as another responsibility or a negative.

Aila: I think that's why we don't consider ourselves as carers or why we don't go to the university to access support.

Claridge, Stone and Ussher (2018:np) briefly explore how 'family responsibilities were thought to impact the amount of time [BAME] students are able to attend [the] University, due to caring, chores or curfews, and this seemed to impact both their social and academic lives'. In their study, they found that South Asian students in their sample mentioned that such responsibilities were not the same for other ethnicities, particularly for White students, though 'they're seen as normal for Asian students'. Whilst students may not name this as a strain, there are of course consequences to consider especially if students are not self-identifying as carers or are looking for support – many of whom were not doing so in our sample. A report from Barnardo's exploring the needs of BAME young carers also identified interpreting duties for their families as being burdensome. Additionally, the report stated how this concept of being young carer was often unfamiliar, as well as a stigma in accessing support (James, 2019). Further, whilst some of our students noted the emotional support of their families (see Samira's quote below), authors have stated that 'care responsibilities may hinder the study progress of students from ethnic minority backgrounds' (Meeuwisse, Severiens and Ph Born, 2010:106).

"Over the summer, my nephew passed away and my friends told me that I could speak Student Services or the uni to get an extension, but I thought that I don't need other people to help me. I am aware of the support, but I was thinking 'it's my family' and I have to deal with the situation myself. Like I am supporting them [her family] and they support me most of the time" (Samira)

IDENTITY FORMATION

Students were also aware of their "difference" through being in predominantly White spaces and institutional settings. However, for those students who grew up and lived in less multicultural settings or had attended schools and colleges that were also less ethnically diverse, there was a normalisation of their "difference" that they had become accustomed to. Additionally, half (n=6) of the respondents disclosed racism and racial microaggressions they had experienced whilst growing up, specific to their "Asian" identities which had an impact as to how they perceived their ethnic and cultural identities.

"I'm not really affected by being in a predominantly White uni because I grew up in a majority White area, so I don't think it makes a difference" (Rashida)

"I'm the only hijabi in my course and I like that. Normally, people would feel uncomfortable, but I grew up being uncomfortable..." (Aila)

RACISM AND "ASIAN-SPECIFIC" MICROAGGRESSIONS

Disaggregating the term "BAME" is of importance here as it is able to exemplify how this term is not able to capture the heterogeneity of experiences related to "BAME" students (Stevenson, 2012). For example, the racialised experiences, as detailed below, are specific only to those coming from South Asian backgrounds. Whilst the cumulative effects of racism and micro-aggressions can still impact all "BAME" students in similar ways (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019), it is important to acknowledge how these experiences are not monolithic and are tied to students' intersectional identities too (e.g. religion):

"It's like with skin colour too, people have told me that I don't look like I'm Indian or I'm too fair for an Indian. I don't think there's anything bad by looking stereotypically Indian or Asian, but I guess people are just not used to seeing what Asian people look like?" (Ayesha)

"I've suffered really bad racism. One time, when I was going to school, my best friend (who was White) and I bought the same day-return ticket for the bus and when we were going home in the afternoon I wasn't let on but my friend was. I wore a headscarf then, but that particular experience made me not wear one, so it does change you" (Mariam)

"I had one colleague, and it was so stupid, there was another Indian woman who worked in another department and she said 'Oh, is that your mum?'" (Rashida)



EMBARRASSMENT TRANSFORMING TO PRIDE

Many students also noted how these early experiences led to feelings of embarrassment emanating from their "Asian" heritage. This included aspects related religion:

'Although I never wore one [a hijab], my sister wore a hijab and some people were off about it, others were nice, but I did feel that embarrassment. I don't anymore.' (Samira)

'I remember as part of our like religious education at school, there was a trip to the Gurdwara. Culturally, my dad is from a Sikh background, and people were just making fun of it and fun of brown people really. I remember just going along with it, pretending I also didn't want to go and that it grossed me out...' (Ian)

It also related to specific aspects related to coming from a (South) Asian background, as detailed in the below exchange by Ayesha and Tamanna:

Ayesha: It's a bit of a sensitive topic but body hair on Asian girls when you're younger. As an Asian, it was very difficult. I used to pretend I could only wear long-sleeve tops and trackies in PE so I could hide it. And you'd get guys saying, 'why do you have that?' and you're like 'because I'm Asian and it just grows at a younger age. I don't know about anyone else, but for me and my other Indian friends, we just got it very very young.

Tamanna: I think there's more understanding about body hair now but at the time, kids would call it out and you'd be really embarrassed about it...I would call it bullying.

However, students were clearly proud and passionate about their "Asian" heritages; yet it was due to these early racist and racialised experiences which led to initial feelings of embarrassment and isolation. One student (Aila) interestingly noted that she was able to use her "difference" and "minority status" as a source of empowerment. Aila mentions how her marginalised identity gave her a form of power to change attitudes and perceptions, specifically about Muslims. It should be noted that this was not a commonly expressed opinion within focus groups, nor is it detailed as empowering when "BAME" students speak about being the few students of colour within classroom settings (Connor et al., 2004; National Union of Students, 2011; Davies and Garrett, 2013) However, this may be something which warrants further research.

"I guess because of those [racist] experiences, I wasn't really proud of my Asian heritage growing up but as you get older, the more comfortable you become with who you are." (Rashida)

"As I grew up, I started to really like my religion and my upbringing, and I started to love being the only Asian. I still love being the only Asian Muslim in the classroom" (Aila)

Section 2 – University and on-campus experiences

Questions in this section related to: decisions to attend the University of Winchester and initial and current experiences as an “Asian” student attending the university.

PRACTICAL DECISIONS TO ATTEND THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

It was found that, for many students, factors influencing their decisions to attend the university were mainly driven through practical motivations rather than students being intrinsically drawn to the university. For example, two students were motivated by their unconditional offers and one student noted that Winchester was willing to accept them with the A level grades they had received. A few students stated how, because of familial influence, they chose Winchester due to the university having more favourable commuting distances based on their context. For example, Ilham and Aila mention how their parents wanted them to stay in the family home whilst attending university, though they would have preferred to move out:

“It wasn’t a choice; I have to commute because my parents are really strict. And I feel like that’s my culture as well, like you’re not allowed to move away, you have to travel because you have to stay at home.” (Ilham)

“My parents wanted me to stay local, if it was my choice I probably would have moved. They probably wanted me at home because of protectiveness. I think Asians and Muslims, our parents play a massive role in our lives, they wouldn’t want us to do something our religion forbids or something that goes against our cultural ideals – so like, going out late, having relationships, drinking or not focusing on education.” (Aila)

However, these students accepted these influences in relation to their culture, as exemplified by Aila’s quote above, highlighting once again the important role families play within the lives of “Asian” students. Additionally, where Mariam and Rashida held caring responsibilities, they also sought out a more “commutable” university should their families require their immediate assistance, as well as wanting to retain their connection to the family unit. This is indicative that for some “Asian” students, their choice of university needed to be one that was able to fit comfortably within their current lives.

“It [university] has to be really convenient for me if I need to take my parents to the doctors or if I need to drop of my dad to the Mosque and then come to uni.” (Mariam)

“I know I’d get homesick if I moved out, so I wanted to commute. I was also able to keep my part-time job from college and it means I can look after my parents as my mum has arthritis and my dad has weak bones.” (Rashida)

Where the University of Winchester belongs to the Cathedral Group, this may also be attractive for some “Asian” students who are religious. For example, Mariam states how the Christian foundation of the university reassured to her that religious obligations would be better facilitated than if she were to attend another

university which did not hold a religious/spiritual ethos. This is an interesting comment implying that despite belonging to a minoritised religious group, there is a comfort knowing that the role of religion is acknowledged and therefore will be better supported.

"I wasn't really scared of coming to Winchester because it has quite a Christian ethos and if you're religious and you go to a religious institution, even if it's not your religion you know they'll respect it." (Mariam)

CULTURE SHOCK – (INITIAL) EXPERIENCES AT UNIVERSITY

When asked about their transition into university, several students noted a few issues. For example, for those students who geographically moved to attend Winchester, there was mention of homesickness – Samira spoke about loss of security by being away from her family, and Kiera was surprised by how much she missed her parents. Rashida's quote below shows an unpreparedness or mismanagement of expectation when beginning university. This could be related to her status as a first-generation university student i.e. 'students who attend university and achieve a university degree (BA/BSc or higher) but whose (step) mother and (step) father did not' (Henderson, Shure and Adamecz-Völgyi, 2019:3) which means a lack of both social and cultural capital aiding transition. Seven students in the sample self-identified as first-generation university students, and there is evidence to suggest that those from BAME backgrounds are more likely to hold this status (Henderson, Shure and Adamecz-Völgyi, 2019).

"I never really understood what I was getting myself into when I came to uni, my older siblings all did apprenticeships but when I came to uni, I presumed it would be like school but just a bit more independent. And it was completely different, I did like the independence, but I didn't realise how different it would be compared to college and school" (Rashida)

Whilst some of these initial experiences may be common concerns amongst the majority of first year students, regardless of their background (Lowe and Cook, 2010; Hassel and Ridout, 2018), others mentioned issues related to university experiences which specifically related to their "Asian" identities and backgrounds.

CULTURAL STARVATION? LACKING "ASIAN" REPRESENTATION AND UNDERSTANDING

A few students mentioned how being in a predominantly White university brought stronger feelings of difference, causing existential issues of seeing how they would "fit into" the wider university community. This in itself can be more of a culture shock for students who are perhaps accustomed to being in more multicultural settings.

"During my first year, there was no one I could relate to in terms of culture, my thoughts and feelings coming to Winchester as a British Asian person. So, coming here and having people that grew up in completely different ways it was like 'wow, how do I fit myself into this?'" (Tamanna)

However, Ibrahim and Tamanna's quotes below may be indicative of managed expectations when attending a predominantly White university, and self-prepping mechanisms that are being adopted in order to adapt into such settings. Nevertheless, others have detailed the consequences of feeling "out of place" for BAME students including feelings of exclusion and thus implicating a sense of belonging (Dhanda, 2010; Stevenson, 2012; Harwood et al., 2018).

"In the least rude possible, unfortunately Winchester is a White place so when you come here, you come with the notion that you're not going somewhere that knows about your culture in any kind of way" (Tamanna)

"It's been really difficult for me personally, I'm from Birmingham which is really multicultural so I knew it would be difficult to adjust. It feels really sort of lonely, again what people have said about not having anyone you feel you can relate. I've met about three South Asian people before I came to this focus group." (Ibrahim)

As a result of Winchester's demographic being predominantly White, some students noted particular concerns and negative experiences from their respective cultural background. For example, Neha expressed frustration and a dissonance experienced between her and peers due to having an accent:

"When I try to make friends with students who grow up here, they don't understand me, they don't tend to correct my pronunciation of words which is the way I pick up and learn. They just say 'ummm, interesting' and just leave it...it's a bit awkward." (Neha)

Additionally, both Ayesha and Tamanna engaged in dialogue which suggested how their cultural values, which placed importance on maintaining contact with their parents, were made to feel abnormal by their flatmates and friends:

Tamanna: I did not expect to not be able to relate to so many people. I did, again, feel a little bit homesick where I was like 'there's not that many people who understand what my culture is like. My parents call me every day and my friends would be like 'why do they do that?'

Ayesha: Yeah, when you're in first year and like meeting all the people you're living with, it was really difficult explaining the values I grew up to flatmates who are White.



Tamanna: Then they're really quick to say 'oh, but you're an adult now, you don't have to listen to your parents' but that doesn't mean the same thing in our culture and most Asian cultures.

Ayesha: Yeah, when you're 18, it doesn't mean we can just do whatever we want.

Ayesha also mentioned having concerns in relation to cooking Indian food within shared accommodation. This feeling of being conscious about the food you cook was also highlighted in the Alterline (unpublished) research, highlighting the everyday stressors Black students face. Whilst Ayesha's concerns were not actualised, this was not the case for Ibrahim as detailed below. It is important to consider the mental impact of racist incidents and how this may produce negative outcomes for students.

Ayesha: I would also say, something really simple, I was scared about food. If I were to cook Indian food, what if it smells?

Ibrahim: I actually had one of my flatmates tell me that my food looked like cat sick. That's always been a thing since primary school, people being judgemental about Asian food. It's made me a bit self-conscious but I'm not going to be called out in my home.

Coupled with this lack of understanding received from their peers, students also mentioned how this was intensified by the lack of representative space carved out for students from "Asian" backgrounds which enshrined their identity and beliefs. In essence, students describe a level of isolation which has been noted elsewhere in the limited literature for (South) "Asian" students in HE (see: Bains, 2002) which emphasise the desire to meet other "Asian" students in order to provide common understanding and sense of solidarity.

"Last year, I was in the Afro-Caribbean and Asian Society, but they changed it to Afro-Caribbean Society so there's no Asian society. I don't feel like there is really that much of us being represented at all"
[Agreement from Ibrahim and Tamanna] (Kiera)

"I have a lot of friends from different backgrounds, and their uni's put on huge events like religious festivals, or just like going out and having a Bollywood night, stuff like that. Because I'm Indian and we celebrate Diwali and other dance festivals, there's nowhere here to celebrate that." (Ayesha)

The implicit consequences from this lack of representation suggest to students that their cultural identities are not ones that are deemed to have significant importance within the university space. Tamanna's quote below also indicates that attempts to communicate their importance for these students may be futile as they represent a minority. This therefore holds implications to how "Asian" students use their voice and raise feedback.

"I feel like I know there are student reps and there's people you can go to, but there so little Asian representation here it's kind of like 'will they actually understand what I'm going on about and where I'm coming from?'" (Tamanna)

"I feel like perhaps people who aren't from an Asian background, or a different cultured background, don't realise the importance of educating people about diversity or being diverse. I don't think some people see it as a big issue, it's important to be diverse for other people to feel like they are accepted." (Ayesha)

Whilst no student disclosed "Asian" specific racism, one student mentioned two occasions of anti-Black racism. The student below describes dealing with ignorant comments in addition to this. Importantly, they describe not reporting such incidences for distrust in how it would be handled, as well as a concern for "ruining" the experience for others.

"Because I'm mixed race, people don't look at me and think I'm Asian, they see me as Black. I've had a flatmate's friend compare a Black person to a monkey. One of the societies I attend, I actually left because there was a lot of anti-blackness....I haven't reported it simply because I don't trust people to take it seriously, I also don't want to risk it being shut down if that kind of behaviour is going on, so I just keep it to myself." (Ibrahim)



ACCEPTANCE

Interestingly, the focus groups were split in terms of how they regarded the university's atmosphere and accommodation to them as "Asian" students. For example, the quotes in the latter subsection predominantly came from Focus Group B. Yet Focus Group A participants were much more positive about the university's efforts of being more representative. For these students, where their intersectional identities included being Muslim, the university's accommodations to their religion were appreciated.

"I am Asian Indian, and for me, White non-Muslim people have been really accommodating when it comes to the university experience. I think the university has made us feel more comfortable rather than uncomfortable so with the Islamic society and they are obviously trying to better the experience for the Asian community." (Aila)

"I think this university is really good when it comes to representation. So, with the Islamic Society or this study taking place. They've given us a prayer room, they are quite mindful of Ramadan which I know they're not that accommodating of at other universities. Stuff like that, you don't expect it and we would never ask because we've never had that representation, we've never been asked these questions before." (Mariam)

Both of the above quotes indicate that meeting the needs of "Asian" students were directly correlated to enhanced feelings of belonging. However, Mariam's quote also raises the importance of facilitating minority student voices, especially those who do not expect certain provisions to be in place for them by virtue of being minoritised (see: Islam et al, 2019 concept of 'satisfied settling').



Section 3 – Learning and teaching experiences

Questions in this section explored the academic experiences of “Asian” students including their relationships to teachers and peers, their classroom interactions, and their experiences relating to assessments. Students were also briefly queried about their aspirations relating to their degree outcome and future careers.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH LECTURERS AND PEERS

Many students from both focus groups expressed clear examples of positive experiences related to their course. This included relationships formed with peers and support they had received from their lecturers. For example, Naurina stated that she felt comfortable approaching any one of her lecturers if she needed to, and Neha believed that the background of a student did not affect how you would be treated by lecturers. The quotes below also corroborate this:

“My course is very close knitted because we are a very small group so when it comes to the assignments we always work together in the library and help each other out. It's a nice atmosphere because we've grown to be very close friends” (Rashida)

“The teachers are really nice, supportive and the course is really interesting” (Samira)

RACIALISED CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES

A few students spoke of the experience of being the “token minority” who are made to be ambassadors in their classrooms when topics related to race or diversity are discussed. This has been detailed as a burden placed on BAME students within the literature elsewhere (hooks, 1994; Hubain et al., 2016; HEPI, 2019) and, as detailed by the quotes below, placed some of our “Asian” students in difficult positions. For example, Ayesha's experience of being singled out and simultaneously disregarded (which Tamanna alludes to have happened to her also) resonates with Gay's (2004:275) assertion that BAME students can often have their contributions invalidated despite being 'assigned the responsibility of being authorities on themselves'.

“There was one lesson about diversity in [x] and the lecturer was talking about how different races should be represented and said 'I would love to hear from people who are part of this group' or something like that. And I was thinking, well obviously that's me and the other Black guy in class, so everyone just looked at you. When I said my opinion, they [the lecturer] were like 'hmmm, I don't know about that...'. I was thinking, why are you asking me about my opinion on diversity in [x], then calling me out in front of everyone and then, when I say my opinion, you were just like 'maybe not?'” (Ayesha)

When also being called upon in a setting whereby your experiences of belonging to a marginalised group may be met with indifference or lack of support, through being the “lone BAME student” (or even individual), some “Asian” students may not feel comfortable expressing their opinions honestly.

"We have a module based around [x] and sometimes my lecturer will say some things and I'll be thinking 'I don't quite agree with that' but I'm almost like 'I shouldn't interrupt' because I don't want cause an issue and I have no one else to back me up and say 'actually I agree with her'" (Tamanna)

"I haven't also had any lecturers who have been people of colour, if I think about it? There are just a couple of lecturers, you don't feel super comfortable talking about certain things because you feel like they won't understand." (Ibrahim)

The exchange between Ibrahim and Ayesha below explains how the action of being called upon, despite the fact that lecturers may hold good intentions, leads to feelings of being "othered" or made to feel vulnerable and, as Tamanna articulates, robs students of an equitable learning experience compared to their peers:

Ibrahim: I know a friend who's also had the experience of being singled out in her class as a person of colour when the topic was on slavery. The lecturer called her out to 'hear about her unique perspective' but I hope everyone has the perspective that slavery is bad, I think that thing is definitely a trend. It's not meant to be in a negative way, they're [lecturers] trying to boost your voice, but it does feel very othering.

Ayesha: Because everyone looks at you.

"Even though I do say my opinion quite a bit, I don't want to be called out and relied upon for my opinion, I want to be learning just as much as everybody else is." (Tamanna)

Ibrahim seemed to be the student that was most affected by classroom interactions when topics were brought up over various intersectional parts of identity beyond race, including mental health and sexuality. This is important in further highlighting those students who belong to multiple marginalised groups, impacting the way in which disadvantage and 'intersectional invisibility' is experienced (Smedley, Myers and Harrell, 1993; Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008).

"There's lecturers I've had good relationships with, but I've definitely had problems with lecturers, not just from a race point of view. It's either been the mental health or LGBTQ+ issues I've had" (Ibrahim)

"I don't feel like I can properly interact with people in the classroom. There is a lot of debate and stuff which ends up being in conflict between myself and other people simply because of the sort of ignorant stuff being said. For example, I've had one White person try and tell me what racism was." (Ibrahim)

ASSIGNMENT DIFFICULTIES

Students were asked about their experiences with assessments and coursework. Due to the varied subjects being studied and the unique context this brought for each student, there were multiple issues raised that were specific to the students who raised them. For example, Neha, who had English as a second language, expressed frustration and dread when being set assignments. This was due to a lack of accommodation in academic requirements put in place which acknowledged that English was not her primary language and that it would take her longer to translate and understand content.

"I feel sometimes it's not fair because why some others who have some kind of issue, they've got extension but for me I just get the same deadline? [sic]" (Neha)

On the other hand, Ayesha, a student studying for a more creative degree, spoke of the difficulty of trying to articulate her vision of having diverse characters that represented her and her experiences. By not being able to fully represent her vision could have an impact on belonging and reinforces what "typical" art and design spaces in HE may look like (i.e. White and Eurocentric) leaving BAME students to become 'pedagogised others' (Hatton, 2012:38). Additionally, her experience reflects how BAME creative students often navigate identity work independently (Stevenson, 2015). Ayesha's below example also represents increased "penalties" incurred if she were to search outside of Hampshire to find more ethnically diverse actors.

"In my course, they tell us to be creative and bring your personal experiences. I wrote a screenplay and my main characters were interracial as that's what I've grown with. We were then told to make it into a film and casting was very very difficult in Hampshire, but they didn't help with that. In terms of paying for actors, we're not given anything, so we have to pay out of our own pocket, but I didn't want to change my characters. So that was kind of difficult." (Ayesha)

In a similar vein, Ibrahim describes the difficulties, again from an intersectional perspective, regarding how creative pieces were met. Ibrahim's below example highlights the consequences of not having spaces responsive to student's identities i.e. becoming silent. In relation to BAME students, Jessop and Williams' (2009) study looking at identity, racism and the curriculum noted how lecturers and curricula were important to help students articulate their views within safe spaces where they would not fear ridicule. Thus, whilst Ibrahim describes another marginalised identity (i.e. LGBTQPIA+ identity), the same can also be applied here where students might be dissuaded from bringing personal experiences into the academic space. Where Ayesha's quote below nods towards a fixation of graded performance within a marketised higher education system (Tomlinson, 2014), again this may discourage students to write about aspects of their identity, background and heritage that they are more passionate about.

"In the pieces that I've written, they've been LGBT related, so I think when you are sharing your work with others in workshops, there's some level of discomfort. Often, in these workshops, I've had some really negative responses to the content, not from an academic point of view but from the LGBT issues I talk about. I've had uncomfortable situations with lecturers and peers that have made me not want to share my work." (Ibrahim)

"I have learnt to get to know who my lecturers are and what they like so to cater to them, which is kind of annoying because if there's a topic I want to do I'm like 'hmm, let me do this so I know I can get a higher grade.'" (Ayesha)

Only one student, Mariam, expressed unfair grading on the basis of race. However, such perceptions have been noted elsewhere in the literature (Bunce et al, 2019; NUS, 2011). Mariam described an assignment experience whereby she felt she was grading unfairly in comparison to her peer (a White student) when exchanging formative assignment marks and feedback. Whilst the university does employ the use of anonymous marking where appropriate and possible, this formative assignment was not. Mariam's main point of contention was not that she was awarded a lower grade (in fact, she was awarded a higher grade) but a perception that her hard work was not appropriately recognised in comparison.

"I remember her [peer] reading her work and it wasn't a 68 or 69 if that makes sense? And it flagged up in my mind at the time and I kind of just saw a hold in a minute like how did like because I'm like I worked really really hard and I'm working according to the mark scheme so I know what 70 looks like what 60 looks like or 50 or 40 percent looks like. And I read theirs, and whilst it was good, you wouldn't say it was anywhere to what I had written...I felt like I had worked 10-20% harder to be 2% better, should I have just dragged my heels in like they [peer] did, then?' They [peer] were actually surprised that they were graded so well." (Mariam)

It was clear that Mariam felt passionately about this particular incident, which she said had played on her mind for a while. She chose to get in touch outside the focus group to offer this feedback because she felt it was important to highlight, though would be uncomfortable raising it with the lecturer who marked her work for fear of consequence and discomfort. Whilst Mariam was the only student who had mentioned this, literature also touches upon these themes. For example, in Akel's (2019) excellent report looking at the role of race in shaping the experiences of BAME students at Goldsmiths university, over 50% of survey respondents believed they needed to work twice as hard to achieve academic success when compared to their White counterparts. Additionally, whilst anonymous marking remains a contentious issue within Higher Education (Pitt and Winstone, 2018), BAME students have noted perceptions of unfair marking and lack of transparency as factors relating to their reported dissatisfaction of assessment and feedback (Surridge, 2008; Singh, 2011).

ACCESSING ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Students were also asked about how much they made use of academic support services. It was alluded that use of these services had low uptake. For example, no student in Focus Group B reported attending an academic skills workshop. Interestingly, whilst students held a general awareness that they could access support, should they wish to, two students stated a reluctance in accessing academic support. Their reasoning behind this were quite different. In the quotes below, Samira took a more individualistic outlook, feeling that her personal issues were not worth highlighting to the university. Mariam, on the other hand, was more concerned about how this would shape racialised perceptions of her. Mariam's quote suggests that she does not want to appear in need of extra-support, for fear of playing into a stereotype. Similar theories of 'stereotype threat' also played out in Claridge et al's (2018) study, particularly by Black students who believed to be perceived as less academically proficient and would then over-compensate to prove otherwise.

"Over the summer, my nephew passed away and my friends told me that I could speak Student Services or the uni to get an extension, but I thought that I don't need other people to help me. I am aware of the support, but I was thinking 'it's my family' and I have to deal with the situation myself." (Samira)

"I don't want anyone to think I'm taking an excuse [in receiving support]. Like, when it's Ramadan, my boss is really good and I know I can take time off, but I don't, I don't want to my colleagues another excuse to hare on my religion. So sometimes you don't want to go out looking for it because you think 'I don't want to give my peers or my course an excuse'." (Mariam).

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Students were also asked about their desired degree and career outcomes. As mentioned earlier, the fixation of graded performance was reflected in that all students expressed desires for an upper-second or first-class degree, with the majority stating they would prefer a first-class degree yet would be happy with an

upper-second class degree. This showed a high level of aspiration amongst our sample of “Asian” students. Many of these students also held clear career plans following their degrees. The report will not name these career paths for want to safeguard students’ anonymity (i.e. certain career paths can allude to specific programmes). However, six students could name clearly plans for career routes and further study options, again indicative of high aspirations apparent within the focus groups. This finding can align to literature which notes that BAME students are likely to attend university for instrumental reasons (e.g. to improve career prospects) (Connor et al., 2004; Bhopal and Takhar, 2010; Page et al., 2016).

However, there may be a dissonance between these aspirations and achieving their goals. The three quotes below highlight how dissonance can occur throughout the student journey – from understanding expectations of being a student, to finding an appropriate work-life balance and securing employment-related opportunities.

“I feel like, still being in first year, I’m still sort of understanding the whole structure of the uni and how things work. I feel like they still need to be a bit more clear on what they are explaining to us.” (Ilham)

“I feel like I need to balance everything a lot better, between work, study and caring. Sometimes you can attend all the lectures and it’s still not enough.” (Mariam)

“The [x] sector is very competitive and because I don’t go to a Russell Group university, I think that puts me at a disadvantage especially compared to other people who will be applying to the same [placement opportunities] that I will be, and even getting a placement I find is really really difficult.” (Aila)



Section 4 – Recommendations

In line with the findings from the focus groups, this section details 22 recommendations emerging from the research. These recommendations have been grouped into themes and split for the university and Student Union in order to provide tailored guidance. Each theme (and its respective recommendations) have undergone consultation with Winchester Student Union's Asian Student Network where they have ranked recommendations in priority order. However, it was emphasised that this should not detract from the importance of each recommendation as many held an equal weighting of significance in the eyes of the Asian Student Network.

It should also be made clear that the recommendations provided also indicate where work has been done or is in progress already by the university and Winchester Student Union. The following recommendations are also caveated by the three themes below:

EMBEDDING OF DIVERSITY AND INCREASED REPRESENTATION

It was made abundantly clear that students' "Asian" identities and heritages were central to their sense of identity. Many students described turbulent individual journeys to reach a point of being proud of their identities. However, they did not feel that these identities were appropriately represented at either university or Student Union level. Both the institution and Student Union should therefore consider the subsequent recommendations, and where possible, consider how they can collaborate. Colleagues with responsibilities around student communications and wider marketing should consider the ways in which diversity is being represented throughout the university so that students feel understood, appropriately represented and part of the university community. This should also be done sensitively which does not mislead students to the level of racial/ethnic diversity apparent on campus.

As one student stated *"throughout your whole life, you're conditioned to expect you won't be accurately represented in anything"* and so the normalcy of inadequate or zero representation must be disrupted to ensure that diverse identities are a welcome part of the university culture.

THINKING INTERSECTIONALLY

This research set out to highlight the problematic nature of grouping BAME student experiences by focusing specifically on "Asian" students at The University of Winchester. However, the diversity within this sub-group was apparent through students' different ethnic and religious backgrounds, geographical locations, degree choices and career aspirations. Approaches that are conscious of this heterogeneity will ensure that students' unique context are taken into account and do not assume a 'silver bullet approach' to dealing with degree-awarding gaps – even the 'A' in 'BAME' warrants further separation.

SMALL, SUSTAINED ACTIONS OF BELONGING

Whilst approaches to dealing with these gaps represent wider systemic issues, and so require fundamental structural change, micro-level action is also important to remember. For example, it was the more understated actions within the university that students appreciated – the simple gesture of providing a Muslim prayer room enabled those students who came from Muslim backgrounds to feel a sense of belonging. As a result, the use of 'micro-affirmations can communicate to students that they are welcome, visible, and capable of performing well in the college environment.' (Powell et al, 2013:np), showing how developing a sense of belonging has been proven to be crucial for student success and retention (Thomas, 2012).

UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Taking an institution-wide approach is imperative to tackling degree-awarding gaps. Therefore, the below recommendations would be inclusive to a range of departments within the university.

CAMPUS CULTURE

1. BAME MENTAL HEALTH PROVISION

Acknowledging the alienation that can be felt by all students of colour in a predominantly White institution, especially concerning students' racialised encounters experienced on a daily basis, the university should seek to increase mental health provisions for BAME students specifically. Initiatives at the university and Student Union such as the Muslim Chaplain, BAME University Network and Asian Students Network can provide informal support to BAME students. However, the toll taken by "Asian"/BAME students must be understood through a mental health lens, especially where certain BAME cultures and communities do not actively acknowledge mental health issues. For example, having an ethnically diverse range of counsellors who may be more culturally attuned the experiences of BAME students is one way the university can accommodate this.

2. BUILDING AWARENESS OF RACE AND DIVERSE CULTURES

Students had mentioned that feelings of isolation were not only due to belonging to a minority group but also from their encounters with their White peers. For example, being made to feel abnormal and infantile for close communication with their parents, or reactions to cooking South Asian food. Therefore, the university may wish to explore ways to better develop intercultural awareness amongst students. For example, the university may be able to utilise their Residential Assistants to deliver meetings within halls of residents about respecting all students' cultures. Additionally, open dialogue about race and ethnicity could be better embedded within the culture of the university. A good example of how this has been facilitated, led by senior management and a Student Union, includes the [University of Surrey's 'In Conversation' topic looking at the BAME student experience](#).

However, following the global reaction to the murder of George Floyd and renewed upturn of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, The University of Winchester has been clear about its intention to improve racial equality, using the Assistant Vice-Chancellor to champion these agendas. This has already included the formation of a Race Equality Action Group, where meetings are co-chaired by 'Student Race Strategic Advisors'.



3. RACIALLY/CULTURALLY DIVERSE EVENTS

The university should consider hosting events which specifically speak to "Asian" backgrounds. As focus group participants heavily represented South Asian backgrounds, students noted a distinct lack of representative events that were facilitated by the university but were aware of other universities who did cater to this need. As some students came from Muslim backgrounds, an example of this could include hosting a Ramadan breaking-of-fast event. It is hoped that the BAME University Network will work to produce events during Ramadan in 2021, as mirroring their selection of events hosted during Black History Month in October 2020.

4. ADDRESSING RACIAL HARASSMENT – POLICY AND TRAINING

The under-reporting of racism within universities at large is not a surprising discovery (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019). The university has sought to address this by developing new Racial Harassment Guidance and a supporting FAQ document. There is also increased visibility and awareness of reporting racism through a 'Speak out – Stand up – Report it' campaign.

In taking an anti-racist rather than zero-tolerance approach to racism, the university is also seeking to develop training for staff and students regarding racial harassment. Importantly, this training should encourage bystander awareness as well as make clear what "White allyship" looks like.

5. INCREASED ETHNIC AND RACIAL DIVERSITY AMONGST STAFF AND STUDENT BODY

Many students mentioned how they would feel more comfortable on campus by seeing other ethnicities represented at the university. This was both in relation to the student and staff body. For example, whilst all students in one focus group believed that staff should be hired on merit, one student said seeing a diversity in staff could encourage other BAME students to attend the university.

Whilst the university has now recruited BAME Ambassadors for access and outreach work, the university may wish to look at their staff recruitment procedures to identify what 'positive action' steps can be taken. Positive role modelling, particularly among BAME students, has been consistently noted as recommendation within the sector in relation to tackling degree-awarding gaps (Berry & Loke, 2011; Dhanda, 2010; Douglas Oloyede, 2018).

6. MULTI-FAITH PRAYER SPACES

Provisions relating to faith must be inclusive of a broad range of religions and spiritualities. Currently, the university has a large Chapel located on the King Alfred quarter, as well as a Muslim Prayer Room. A recently established a contemplative space in the West Downs Centre which is 'open to all faiths and none' has also been introduced. However, two students mentioned following Hinduism and noted the lack of space dedicated to their faith (not only at the university but also within Winchester at large, where there is no temple/Gurdwara).

The problem with spaces that are 'open to all faiths and none' is that they follow an approach towards equality rather than equitability. For example, whilst Christians may be able pray more contemplatively, Muslims and Sikhs have forms of prayer which are much more performative. Therefore, such spaces can be deemed as inaccessible which may dissuade or prevent students from these faiths from being able to pray. The university's projects and estates management team intend to explore the possibility of more spaces for faith across the two campuses.

7. BESPOKE FEEDBACK OPPORTUNITIES

Almost all students spoke highly of taking part in focus groups which reinforced a perception that the university cared for and was dedicated to enhancing their student experience. As demonstrated, there were implications to how students' voices could be used and were being heard. Therefore, both professional and academic departments may wish to consider how they can reach "Asian" (as well as other BAME) students to understand what their needs may be.

ACCESS, SUCCESS AND PROGRESSION

1. TARGETED STUDENT ACCESS

Many students mentioned how their decisions to attend university were mainly driven by extrinsic factors, implying that university choice was driven by how much it accommodated to their current contexts. In 2020, the university recruited BAME Ambassadors who will be trained to work with BAME communities as role models and engage in conversations about HE. Ambassadors from "Asian" backgrounds may find it suitable to emphasise the practical benefits of attending a local university for those intending to commute, as well as other provisions that may accommodate to religious requirement e.g. highlighting the university's same-gendered student accommodation.

2. TRANSITION SUPPORT INTO AND THROUGH UNIVERSITY

Students mentioned an initial difficulty with transitioning into university life, mostly from a cultural point of view where their British "Asian" identity felt at odds with the wider student population. Therefore, transition events at the beginning of the academic year (particularly for first year students) may be key in ensuring a comfortable start to university life – especially as a student of colour attending a predominantly White institution. It can be argued student groups (such as Winchester Student Union's Asian Students Network) could facilitate this in future years, though the university may wish to consider how they can contribute to smooth transitions too.

The university could also look at supporting students' progression into each academic year. One student mentioned how the expectations for students, including the content they will learn and skills required, could be made more transparent at the beginning of each academic year. Programmes may then wish to consider setting these expectations collectively with students at the beginning of each academic year as they enter a new level of study. These transition activities would also be considerate of first-generation university student status, of which a significant proportion of students held.

3. TARGETED EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

In relation to supporting student transition and progression, and how students held clear aspirations regarding their career plans, the university may wish to hold targeted support activities. Whilst BAME students report worse employment outcomes after graduating (Berger and Wild, 2017), the university would need to consider whether they would target support to BAME students overall, or target programmes which report lower graduate employment figures. The university has already taken steps to ensure targeted support with tailored Faculty Employability Advisors in programmes such as Law, Criminology and Psychology.

Having established the more extrinsic reasons "Asian" (and other BAME) students attend university for, this also intersects with the role of families within (South) "Asian" communities. For example, two students pursuing creative degrees noted the difficulty in explaining to their parents the employment outcomes they would be able to access. This is in line with findings that suggest 'Arts subjects are seen as having poor career prospects in BAME communities' (Alberts & Atherton, 2016:5). As a result, tailored information, advice and guidance which could be made use of on Open Days to ease parental concerns would be worthwhile to explore.

4. PROMOTION AND TARGETING OF YOUNG ADULT CARERS SUPPORT

Whilst only two students detailed heavy care responsibilities they were undertaking alongside their studies, this may be indicative of larger numbers of "Asian" young carers who do not self-identify as such (especially where cultural values place heavy importance on the family unit) (The Children's Society, 2018). Where widening participation activity at the university extends to young adult carers, the university may explore ways to promote and target support to "Asian" and other BAME students. This may include campaigns that challenge misconceptions about what a young carer is and the importance of self-identification. An analysis of those students who are already recognised as young adult carers to identify specific gaps or additional considerations would also be beneficial.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

1. PROVISIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Whilst only one student within focus groups mentioned difficulties related to having English as a second language, it was seen to impact on their time and ability to complete assignments. The university has a dedicated English Language Support Unit, however, there may be a closer consideration as to how these students may be further supported.

2. DIVERSIFYING THE CURRICULUM/CLASSROOM

The HE sector has been imbued in discussion surrounding what it means to decolonise curricula and classroom cultures at universities, usually entailing a re-evaluation of teaching, learning and pastoral support (Bhambra, Gebrial and Nişancioğlu, 2018; SOAS, 2018; Liyanage, 2020). Decolonisation calls for more than diversifying content/reading lists but looking at the everyday practices which implicitly and explicitly privilege colonial ways of working. Following the experiences of students, the below considerations need to be taken on board within pedagogical spaces:

Teaching staff need to establish appropriate ways of bringing light to racially diverse experiences and not merely rely upon the few students of colour in their classrooms to bring their voices and vulnerabilities within classrooms spaces. It is not acceptable to select the few students of colour within classrooms to act as ambassadors of their race or ethnicity.

- Teaching staff must be empowered to take an active role when tensions relating to race and other protected characteristics are faced within the classroom setting. For example, if students are met with negative or ignorant remarks when discussing their race (or other parts of their intersectional identity), lecturers must be able to diffuse this in a way that does not further alienate BAME students.
- Staff should consider the ways in which they are allowing teaching communities to flourish and consider a more relational form of pedagogy (hooks, 1994; Bovill, 2020). Building communities where every student can feel they can participate and bring their identities within learning and teaching spaces will assist in building belonging and allow students to enjoy an academic experience that feels more relevant to their lives.
- Teaching staff must also seek to reduce power differentials between themselves and students to allow students to feel comfortable in approaching them regarding racially or ethnically sensitive issues (e.g. having English as a second language or a perceiving of unfair grading).
- Related to assessment and marking criteria, teaching staff may want to consider ways in which the process of marking can be made more transparent. For example, exercises such as whole classroom marking or facilitated peer marking can empower students to feel like active stakeholders in their learning journey and improve upon their feedback.

The University of Winchester's Learning and Teaching department have recently developed shared pages to support colleagues in the process of decolonisation across the different faculties. However, the above recommendations suggest that further training should be offered to staff when approaching topics of racial/ethnic diversity.

3. ACADEMIC FACILITATION DURING CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Whilst this did not emerge from the findings of this research, student representatives from the Asian Student Network suggested that there needed to be some flexibility (with regards to attending lectures and deadlines for assignments) when students needed to be with their families to celebrate cultural and religious festivities without facing academic penalty.

4. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FUND FOR REPRESENTATION IN CREATIVE DEGREES

One student noted the difficulty in representing their identity within creative pieces of work which led to a compromise of their artistic vision. In recognising the unique circumstance identity work presents for those students pursuing degrees focussed in the Arts, the Faculty of the Arts may wish to consider a fund that supports students from "Asian" and BAME backgrounds enabling them to appropriately create work that truly represents this vision e.g. recruiting actors of colour when creating films. Such a fund could be placed with limits and run similarly to the university's 'Winchester Employability Fund' which provides students from certain "widening participation" backgrounds with monetary support to accessing driving lessons, re-sitting GCSEs, unpaid internships/voluntary work and presenting at academic conferences.

5. TIMETABLED ACADEMIC SUPPORT

The majority of students within focus groups alluded to a low uptake of utilising academic support services available to them. Some students were not aware of the services available and inferred a reluctance of utilising certain provisions (e.g. applying for extenuating circumstances). Whilst access to such information is available, usually through the virtual learning environment and intranet pages, lecturers and administrators may wish to consider embedding this information at regular intervals throughout the academic year. For example, one student noted how, following feedback to their Student Academic Representative, their module was able to embed one-hour drop-in sessions for students to attend if they needed clarity on anything that was discussed within the week. Programmes may wish to consider how this can be scaled across a course and not simply to one module. As noted by Stevenson (2012), early feedback should be offered to students and staff should aim to do this collectively with students so they can explain what they do not understand about feedback.



WINCHESTER STUDENT UNION

Whilst Winchester Student Union operate independently from the university, they take an important role as part of the university culture and consistently make clear their commitment to equality and diversity agendas. These recommendations thus work in tandem with how to create a more racially inclusive campus culture.

1. DIVERSE CAMPAIGNS AND EVENTS

Winchester Student Union have a strong record for drawing attention to important societal issues. This includes their '[Boys do Cry](#)', '[This Girl Can](#)' and '[Time to Talk](#)' campaigns held in 2019-20. Where many students noted specific issues related to their "Asian" backgrounds, the Student Union may wish to consider ethnically-diverse campaigns as an extension to these successful campaigns to build intercultural awareness and highlight a range of societal topics that hold relevance to "Asian"/BAME students. This may include:

- Body Positivity campaign (where body hair on South Asian girls was noted to be source of embarrassment, especially at a younger age).
- Racial Awareness and Anti-Racism campaign (highlighting how racial inequalities differ between and amongst ethnic minority groups as well as a going beyond a zero-tolerance attitude to racism).
- Religious-based Awareness campaign (students mentioned their intersectional identities of coming from Muslim and Sikh backgrounds).

Alongside campaigns, Winchester Student Union may also wish to consider embedding racial and ethnic diversity within their calendar of events. For example, the Student Union generally host a weekly 'Mad about Movies' night. The selection of movies could be extended to include Bollywood films and a range of genres from different countries and cultures. [Huddersfield Student Union](#) provide a good example of the ways in which a Student Union can be responsive to "BAME" related issues with a diversity of events run by their BAME Ambassadors. In a similar vein, the union's established Representational Networks can be utilised in this way to co-run these campaigns and events.

2. ADDRESSING RACIAL HARASSMENT – POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Currently, Winchester Student Union signpost to the university's channels of reporting harassment. However, the Student Union may wish to further develop or highlight to students the process and procedures of reporting harassment, especially if these occur within Student Union activity groups such as societies or sports teams.

3. STUDENT ACADEMIC REPRESENTATIVES (STARS) – MONITORING AND TRAINING

Winchester Student Union takes on responsibility for training and coordination of StARs – elected students within course programmes who represent the student voice at Student-Staff Liaison Committee meetings. Winchester Student Union have produced a Student Engagement Demographics Report and have identified low representation of BAME students in all Union activity, with the exception of representational networks. This pertinent report highlights an awareness of identifying demographical gaps in engagement. Additionally, if there is a concern amongst "Asian" students that their feedback may not be perceived as being important, the Student Union may wish to consider including within their training given to StARs about the ways they can engage better with BAME peers. For example, exploring how StARs can ensure that BAME students feel comfortable approaching them with their feedback, if they come from an ethnically White background.

4. BAME STUDENT OFFICER

Alongside three sabbatical roles (President, Vice-President, Education and Welfare and Vice-President, Activities), the Student Union have elected Student Officers. These Student Officers have no pre-defined

portfolio yet will discuss (amongst the Executive team) areas of work they will be focussing on. As one student mentioned being aware of student representatives and student officers, they were reluctant to approach them for issues related to their "Asian" background. This may suggest that having a student officer role that was explicitly linked to BAME students would encourage "Asian" and other BAME students to feel comfortable and even encouraged to provide their feedback (and feel confident that this feedback would be acted upon). Whilst some of the Union's Student Officers and the President aim to focus on equality and diversity issues, it could be argued that this is far too broad and becomes somewhat ambiguous as to what areas these students are supporting.

5. MANDATORY ALLY AND BYSTANDER AWARENESS TRAINING FOR SPORTS TEAM, SOCIETIES AND REPRESENTATIONAL NETWORKS

A zero-tolerance approach to racism is of course reiterated when the Student Union run training with committee-level members of their sports teams, societies and networks. However, it was found that racism can occur within activity groups and there may be reluctance in reporting this for fear that it would not be taken seriously, and that it may ruin an opportunity for other students to enjoy. Therefore, an anti-racist stance can be encouraged by ensuring that those students holding committee-level roles are required to attend ally and bystander awareness training so they are able to take an active role in ensuring that racism does not occur within student groups, and that they know how to deal with it if it does occur.

6. ASIAN SOCIETY

Winchester Student Union have recently introduced their Representational Networks initiative which aims to support underrepresented student groups. Representational Networks operate in a similar way to societies yet receive protected status and extra support from the Student Union. A clear recommendation from the focus groups was students' desire to have an "Asian" student's society. Following internal dissemination of this project, the Student Union have been proactive and created an Asian Students Network (led by a student who took part in a focus group) which has been implemented in the 2020/21 academic year.



Conclusions

In summary, the report provides a multi-pronged approach in ameliorating the experiences of "Asian" students at The University of Winchester, who still regard their time at Winchester as largely pleasant and welcoming. However, the commonplace feeling of being partially represented and not holding a similar level of entitlement to the university space has been interrogated and employing these recommendations will ensure the university continues its journey of improving the student experience for all of its students.

At the point of undertaking this research, The University of Winchester recorded a large statistically significant gap in degree outcomes between UK domiciled White and "Asian" students, standing at 33 percentage points in 2017-18. Whilst these gaps fluctuate, it is important to acknowledge how disaggregating this data allowed the institution to proactively address this inequality and thus take meaningful action. For example, the research will be internally and externally disseminated in order to have maximum impact both within and outside the institution – especially where the "Asian" student experience has been largely neglected.

Whilst the project was deemed largely successful in fulfilling its overarching aim to understand the lived experiences of UK domicile "Asian" students in order to illuminate explanations of the enlarging degree awarding gap at University of Winchester, there are a few limitations to acknowledge. Firstly, given the response and participation rates being low (i.e. only capturing 7% of our UK "Asian" student population), the validity of the findings may be questionable. Additionally, there needs to be the acknowledgment of a largely South Asian demographic within our student sample. Further, although gender was not collected, the research team acknowledged an over-representation of female students. Therefore, the findings may not be generalisable to students from a Chinese background (for example), or those identifying as male. However, it should be noted that the gender split of university's student population is approximately a 70:30 female-male ratio.

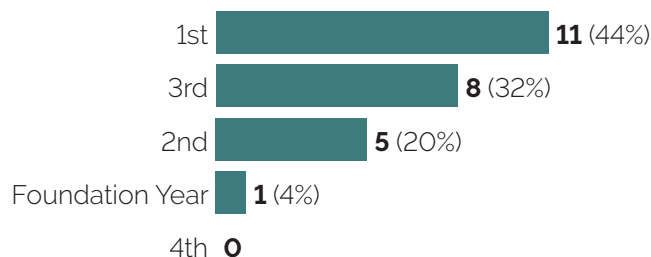
Findings of the report also suggest areas for further research. For example, the experience of "Asian" students who undertake heavy caring responsibilities, though would not ordinarily identify as such, could warrant further investigation to fully understand the implications of this throughout the student lifecycle and how support may be provided in a culturally appropriate way. As noted, it would be interesting to understand how male "Asian" students experience university and whether or not they too place such significance on the family unit. Recruiting a male student research partner could actively support further research in this regard.

The University of Winchester aspires to be the university for sustainability and social justice. Therefore, we must see this as synonymous with racial justice and a deep commitment to closing gaps in outcomes and experience for a range of different student groups. By highlighting the experiences of "Asian" students within this report, it was clear that more needs to be done to actively accept and value our students from these backgrounds. Taking on board the report's findings and recommendations, in line with the activities that are already being undertaken by the university, can only seek to dismantle the systemic inequality experienced by these groups within Higher Education.

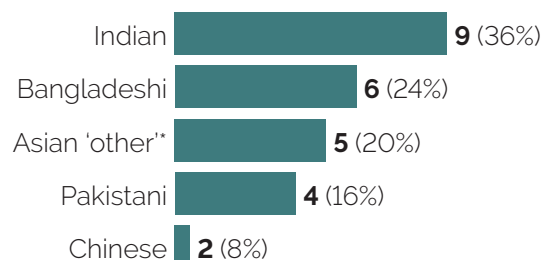
Appendices

APPENDIX 1 – ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

2 Year of study

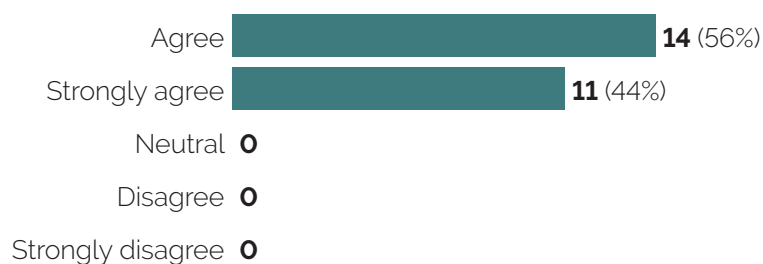


4 I self-identify as coming from this background

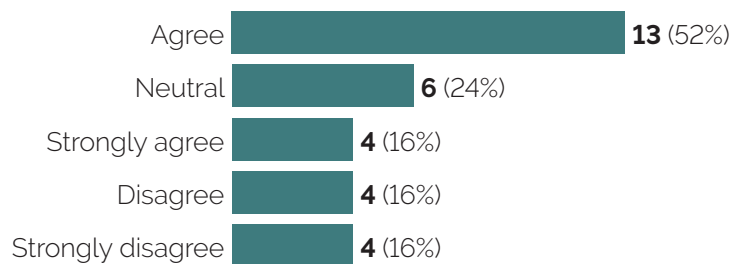


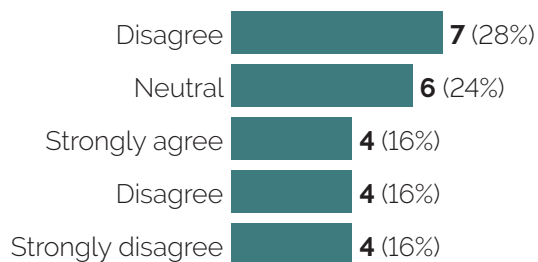
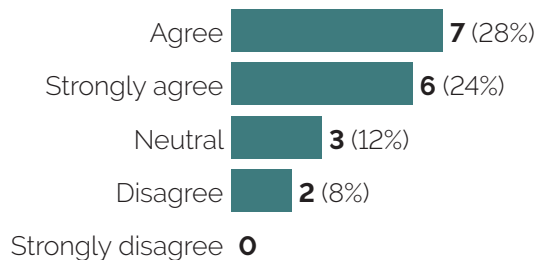
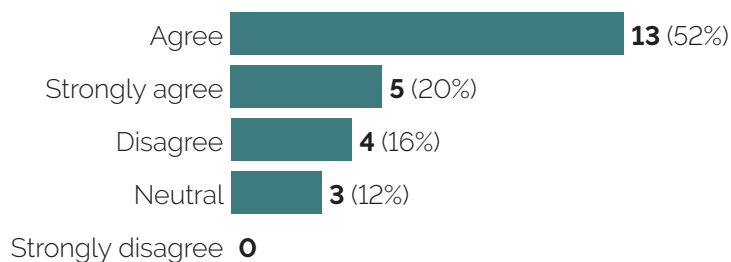
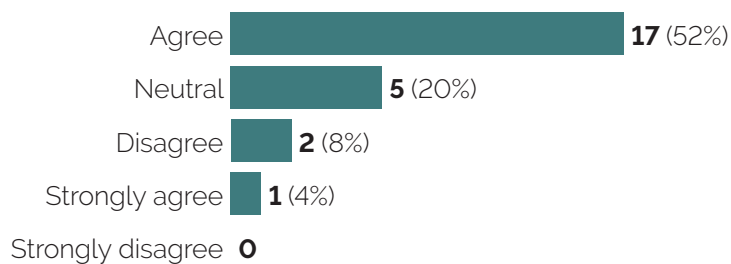
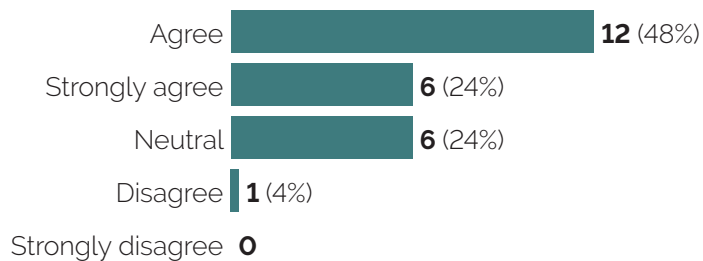
*'Asian' Other responses included: Thai, Israeli, Nepalese, Half Indian, a quarter Lebanese and a quarter Zanzibari (ethnically, mostly Omani and part African), White/Filipino

5 Being Asian is a significant part of my background

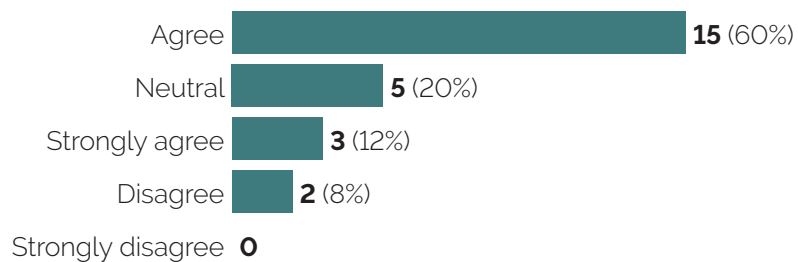


6 I believe my day-to-day lived experiences are shaped by being Asian

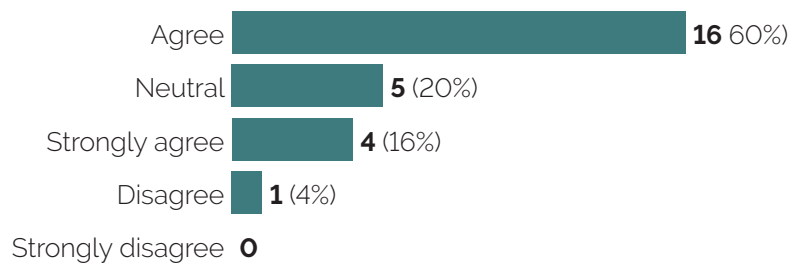


7 My family played a major influencing role in the decision to study my course**8** I feel confident in my ability to balance my student life with my family life**9** I feel confident in my ability to balance my student life with my social life**10** I have a good relationship with my teachers**11** I have a good relationship with my peers on my course

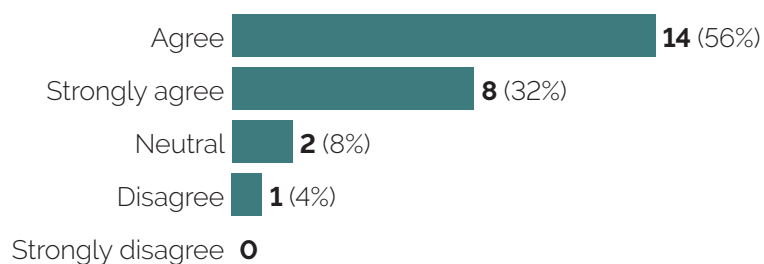
12 Overall, I am happy with my course curriculum (i.e. the content taught) so far



13 I know where to go if I need academic, career or general support



14 I have some idea of what I want to do when I graduate from university



APPENDIX 2 – FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

SECTION 1 – IDENTITY IN RELATION TO BEING ASIAN

1. What are your lived experiences of being 'Asian'?

Drawing on themes related to:

- Family/caring responsibilities
- Practices/ values/shared language/religion/traditions

2. Is it important for you that the university recognises your Asian identity?

- In what way does the university do this?
- In what way does the university do not do this?

SECTION 2 – EDUCATIONAL STORY

1. Did you have any particular issues (in or outside of school/college) which affected your school and or college experiences?

2. What factors influenced your decision to come to the University of Winchester specifically?

SECTION 3 – UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCES

Quick poll - 'how many of you are commuting students?'

What influenced your choice to commute?

Quick poll - 'how many of you are the first-generation university students (i.e. your parents, step-parents have not been to university)?'

1. Can you talk us through your initial experiences when you first began university?

2. What has your learning and teaching experience been like so far?

- lecturers,
- peers,
- experience of assignments,
- taking part in extracurricular activities,
- being in a predominantly White institution

3. Do you feel a sense of belonging to the university?

4. Is there anything the university can do support your academic experience?

5. Is there anything the university can do support your social experience?

SECTION 4 – FUTURE ASPIRATIONS AND GOALS

1. Quick poll: What grade do you want to achieve at the end of your degree? Are you expecting to go into a particular profession with your degree?
2. Do you feel like you are doing enough to achieve this?
3. Do you know what you need to do in order to achieve this?
4. Do you feel like you are receiving appropriate support to help you gain your desired (degree) outcome?
 - university support,
 - familial support,
 - informal support networks

Last question:

- Of all things discussed today, what do you think has been the most important aspect impacting your experience here as an 'Asian' student?



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RECOMMENDED CITATION:

Islam, M. (2021) Disaggregating the BAME Degree-Awarding Gap: Understanding and Exploring the 'Asian' Student Experience. University of Winchester. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.19843.63525.